Cocaine also known as crack, blow, coke.
- Medical Uses: Cocaine was a drug for topical anesthesia (numbing agent) during surgeries but is no longer used.
- Illicit Uses: An addictive drug used to cause energetic and pleasurable states by stimulating the brain.
  - Cocaine comes in several forms.
    - Powder form can be injected or inhaled through the nose.
    - Other forms, like crack, can be smoked.

So how does it work?
- Cocaine works in the brain to keep the chemicals responsible for causing pleasurable feelings to keep working.
- Addiction develops because of this stimulating experience.
- Tolerance also develops after multiple episodes meaning larger amounts or more often usages are needed to get the same high.
- Withdrawal effects are seen due to the loss of the pleasurable feelings.

What happens when Cocaine is mixed with...?
Alcohol?
When taken together, the body converts both of these substances to a toxic and lethal substance that attacks the brain, causing long-term and permanent damage.

Marijuana?
- The abuse of marijuana may lead to abuse of cocaine because marijuana can be the “gateway drug” to harder drugs.
- Marijuana users are 85 times more likely to try cocaine than nonusers.

Is there a chance this substance could contain contaminants if it is obtained “on the street”? If so, what are the effects of these contaminants?
- Cocaine can be combined with other white powders like cornstarch, talcum powder, or sugar to look like a user is getting more.
  - The effects of these other products are not dangerous but may irritate the nose or skin if inhaled or injected.
  - Some substances mixed in can be active or dangerous powders.
  - Procaine is sometimes added to increase the numbing effects.

What if you take Cocaine while you are pregnant?
- Babies are usually born early with low birth weights and incomplete development.
- Some babies, sometimes called “crack babies” have long-term effects like decreased intelligence and social skills.
- Mothers who abuse also neglect doctor’s visits and overall healthcare.

What are some dangers of injecting cocaine?
- There is an increased chance of bacterial or virus infections from sharing or reusing needles.
- HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C are viral infections that can spread, which are all permanent diseases.
- There are unsightly track marks or bruises on arms at inject sites.

Cocaine Overdose
- Similar symptoms seen with short-term use except that they are more intense and they may not last as long.
- The exact amount for an overdose varies from person to person.
- There is a higher chance of heart attack, stroke, or severe bleeding with an overdose. All of these effects increase the chance of death.

Short term effects of taking Cocaine
- Occurs within the first few minutes after a single dose and can last from minutes to hours.

Judgment
- High doses may cause aggressive or bizarre behavior with paranoia.
- Cocaine use may also cause risk-taking behaviors not normally seen otherwise.

Health
- The need for food and sleep are blocked which can cause fatigue or less appetite after cocaine wears off.

Other Effects
- Many of the short term effects are lost and the opposite occurs with long-term use like loss of energy, memory, or alertness.

Long term effects of taking Cocaine
- Since cocaine is so addictive, many abusers experience these long-term effects while using or after withdrawal.
- Tolerance also develops so higher amounts are needed for the same effects as previous uses.

Health
- Cocaine blocks the need for sleep and food which could cause long-term nutrition or weight problems. Long term cocaine use may also cause heart problems like abnormal rate or rhythm which can cause heart attacks, strokes, or even death.

Judgment
- Abusers who need to take multiple doses for a pleasurable effect may experience temporary paranoid psychosis described as having hallucinations, loss of reality, and increased irritability.
  - Addicts lose touch with reality and may take any means to obtain cocaine.

Other Effects
- The main effect seen is increased energy. With more energy, users may feel an increased body temperature, increased heart rate, and uncontrolled shaking. Blood pressure can also increase but the user usually cannot feel this effect. First time users who take too much may cause their heart to stop completely, resulting in death.

For more information contact the Student Health Center at 348.3878

References